

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 NOUAKC 01099 120723Z

ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04

H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SSC-01 AID-05 EB-07 COME-00

TRSE-00 /091 W

-----130259Z 045683 /63

R 111545Z MAY 77

FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7481

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

C O N F I D E N T I A L NOUAKCHOTT 1099

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINR, PGOV, PINT, MR

SUBJECT: MINISTERIAL CHANGES IN MAURITANIAN GOVERNMENT

REF: (A) NOUAKCHOTT 211, (B) NOUAKCHOTT 0548, (C)

75 NOUAKCHOTT A-62, (D) NOUAKCHOTT 242

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED:

1. THIRD ROUND OF CABINET CHANGES THAT BEGAN IN LATE JANUARY, IN AFTERMATH OF FINANCIAL SCANDAL, WAS ANNOUNCED FOLLOWING CONCLUSION OF NATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING ON MAY 6. ONE NEW CABINET OFFICER HAS BEEN APPOINTED AND FOUR MINISTERS WERE REASSIGNED TO DIFFERENT MINISTERIAL POSTS.

2. THE ANNOUNCED CHANGES ARE:

A. MINISTER OF STATE FOR FINANCE AND COMMERCE, MOHAMMEDEN OULD BABBAH. FORMER MINISTER OF PRIMARY EDUCATION.

B. MINISTER OF FINANCE, BA IBRAHIMA, FORMER MINISTER OF PLAN-
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NING, HANDICRAFTS AND TOURISM.

C. MINISTER OF PRIMARY EDUCATION, ETHMANE SID-AHMED YESSA. FORMER MINISTER OF FINANCE.

D. MINISTER OF PLANNING, HANDICRAFTS AND TOURISM,
ABDALLAHI OULD CHEIKH. FORMER MINISTER OF PUBLIC SER-

VICE AND LABOR.

E. MINISTER OF PUBLIC SERVICE AND LABOR, SAKHO MAMADOU.
FORMER GOVERNOR OF FIFTH REGION.

END UNCLASSIFIED; BEGIN CONFIDENTIAL:

3. COMMENT: THE PROMOTION OF BABBAH TO BE MINISTER OF STATE IS SOMEWHAT SURPRISING. HE HAS NO ECONOMIC EXPERIENCE AND IS GENERALLY CONSIDERED TO BE NOT VERY EFFECTIVE. MOREOVER, HIS APPOINTMENT TO THE NATIONAL POLITICAL BUREAU DOES NOT REESTABLISH THE BLACK-MOOR BALANCE THAT EXISTED BEFORE THE JANUARY CHANGES (REF D) BUT RATHER INCREASES THE MOORISH MAJORITY. THIS APPOINTMENT SUGGESTS THAT PERHPAS LOYALTY IS A MORE IMPORTANT QUALITY THAN TECHNICAL COMPETENCE EVEN IN THE VITALLY IMPORTANT ECONOMIC SECTOR. THE TRANSFER OF BA, WHO HAS AN EXCELLENT REPUTATION FOR COMPETENCE AND INTEGRITY, TO BE MINISTER OF FINANCE IS AN ATTEMPT TO GET THAT MINISTRY MOVING AGAIN. THE MINISTRY HAD BEEN BROUGHT TO A STANDSTILL BY THE SCANDAL-RELATED DISMISSAL OF ITS MINISTER IN JANUARY AND FORMER MINISTER YESSA APPARENTLY COULD NOT GET THE MINISTRY FUNCTIONING AGAIN DURING THIS THREE AND ONE-HALF MONTH TENURE. EITHER BECAUSE THE MINISTER WAS CONCERNED THAT THERE WERE STILL SOME IN THE MINISTRY WHO HAD BEEN INVOLVED IN THE SCANDAL OR BECAUSE HE WAS UNCERTAIN AS TO THE CONSEQUENCES OF PROPOSED ACTIONS, THE MINISTRY MOVED VERY SLOWLY. ABDALLAHI OULD CHEIKH, NEW MINISTER OF PLANNING, IS REGARDED AS COMPETENT AND SAID TO HAVE THE CONFIDENCE OF THE PRESIDENT.
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IT WAS OULD CHEIKH WHO WAS SENT TO THE MAURITANIAN SECTION OF THE FORMER SRUNISH SAHARA TO ORGANIZE THE MAURITANIAN BUREAUCRATIC STRUCTURE THERE. WHILE HE HAS NO GOVERNMENT PLANNING EXPERIENCE, HE HAS HAD SOME ECONOMIC TRAINING, WORKED SEVERAL YEARS FOR MIFERMA (FORMER PRIVATE IRON MINE CORPORATION NOW PART OF SNIM) IN GREAT BRITAIN AND INHERITS A STAFF CONSIDERED TO BE ONE OF THE MOST COMPETENT AMONG ALL MINISTRIES. SAKHO MAMADOU, THE NEW FACE IN THE CABINET, SERVED AS GOVERNOR OF THE NINTH REGION. ACCORDING TO A SENIOR LABOR OFFICIAL, SAKHO HAS NO BACKGROUND IN THE LABOR FIELD.

FARLEY

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